

## Interview H0215: with Shakabpa, Wangchug Denden [tib. zhwa sgab pa, dbang phyug bde ldan], (India, 1983) : Part No. 6 of 13

*W.D. Shakabpa was a very prominent aristocratic government official who held the rank of Tsipön. He is the author of "Tibet: A Political History." He continues talking in detail about the Panchen Lama's plan to return to Tibet and how he died in Jyekundo. The subject also talks about the sudden arrival of the Kazaks in Lhasa and about the Chinese Communist's Long March through Tibetan areas and how the Tibetan Government sent Panda Tobgye to talk with the Chinese. He also talks about the arrival in Tibet of the German expedition led by Schaefer. The subject then explains in detail how the Tibetan Government announced the candidates for the selection of the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama and how the Auspicious Tsondu was held to announce the confirmation of the candidate born in Amdo as the real reincarnation.*

The Panchen Lama formally accepted to return and had given a separate letter stating this.

Q

To whom did he give this letter?

A

He had addressed this letter to the Regent, the Prime Minister and the [Kalön](#) [tib. rgyal srid bka' shag]. In the letter he mentioned that he would return along with a Bodyguard Regiment of Chinese and requested the government to grant them necessary travel documents and also to issue a general order to all the areas on the route to receive them. The Khendrön Losum also sent a letter which mentioned that 500 Chinese soldiers with 20 officers had left from Xining with the Panchen Lama.

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Then they received another letter which stated that a Chinese man named Wang something and a fellow from [Tashilhunpo](#) had left from [Dartsedo](#) with a large number of retinue. This sent the government officials into a furor and a hurried meeting was held. In the meeting most of the kalön voiced their disbelief. However, they sent a special envoy to receive the Panchen Lama in a hurried manner. Doring [tib. rdo ring] was one of the envoys. They went to Jyekundo [tib. skye rgu mdo] and met the procession there. They saw the Chinese soldiers-escorts too. The envoys talked through the Joint Governor of Kham, the Doji Drelpo [tib. mdo spyi sbrel po] that the Panchen Lama cannot return with his so-called Chinese escorts. At that time, the Doji Dzasa was Surkhang Surpa. So they had a lot of talks on this.

Meanwhile a lot of meetings were held in Lhasa and everyone agreed that no Chinese should be allowed to accompany the Panchen Lama. He should be only allowed to come up with his regular Tibetan attendants. Instructions were dispatched to Chamdo stating that no Chinese or Mongolians should be allowed to come on the pretext of being his attendants. All these instructions were passed on and discussed between the Panchen Lama and the Doji. Further instructions were sent to all the border guards asking them to stop any such parties including Chinese and Mongolians.

Since the Panchen Lama had such a large party and a lot of wealth to bring up, probably numerous people went down from [Tashilhunpo](#) to receive him bringing large amounts of fodder and other necessities. This created a lot of speculation and rumors [tib. sbir sgra]. Secondly, a large number of traders like Noyön [tib. nor yon] of [Tashilhunpo](#) had come to Chamdo [tib. chab mdo], Markham and Powo [tib. spo bo] to collect grain, fodder and butter. This again created wild speculation and the large caravan from [Tashilhunpo](#) added further confusion to the whole situation. Neither side knew exactly what was really going on like the proverb, "The enemy couldn't guess about one's enemy." [tib. dgra tshod dgras ma lon pa]. At that time again there was some talk about Phabongka [tib. pha bong kha] Lama going to Chamdo to appeal to the Doji.

Q

I think he did more than persuading the Doji. He had also written personally to Reting Regent.

A

Whatever the case may be, he [Phabongkha] definitely went to Jyekundo.

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Q

Phabongka Lama went down personally to appeal to the border security force to permit the Chinese escorts to enter the country and told them that the Chinese escorts were harmless and they would be no threat to the government.

A

There was nothing about this in the Tsondu documents.

Q

That would not be entered in the record book since it was a private letter written by Phabongka.

A

All the correspondence between the Doji and the Panchen's [Nangmagang](#) and about the talks with the Panchen Lama's Dzasa in Chamdo were received by the assembly. Now the matter was still not settled well and it became a very big dispute [tib. ya 'gal chen po], so they convened a Large General Assembly, a Tsondu chemo, [tib. tshogs 'du chen mo].

Q

What happened in the Large General Assembly? Weren't you the Tshipön at that time?

A

No, I was not. I was [tsipa](#) and actually I was in charge of keeping the documents of the Tsondu [tib. yig tshags].

Q

At that time, [Trimön](#) was yet to come into power, right?

A

Yes, I think most probably, [Lukhangwa](#) was the Acting Tshipön or the Senior Kadrung. We were together in the meeting. The meeting was held at the New Assembly Hall [tib. tshom chen gsar pa] whereas usually the ceremony was held in the Potala. There was numerous talk about the Panchen Lama and it was exciting.

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In addition to that, he had sent a written notice known as a dayig [tib. brda yig]. It was brought down by the Trungtsi. The letter was written on a yellow brocade with round dragon designs (tib. dzögö [mdzod gos]). The heading of the letter was as follows, "This notice is from the office of the Panchen's [Nangmagang](#) at Jyekundo and all the [dzong](#) and estates and subjects located on the routes within the Great [Tashilhunpo](#) Monastery via Lhasa should keep in their mind the following content: [tib. skye mdo nang ma [gang](#) nas/gdan sa chen po bkra shis lhun po phyin gyi lha sa brgyud lam 'khel rdzong gzhis rgyal dmangs rnams nas nges dgos].

As soon as the Assembly heard the way the letter was addressed, the meeting erupted into a roar of indignant protest [tib. 'bar]. In the letter, Lhasa was not mentioned rightfully as the capital of a nation, but like a mere name of site on the route. On top of that, the letter dictated that the Panchen Lama was returning along with his large number of attendants and necessary accommodations, thrones and fodder for such and such amount of horses should be prepared. Further, they had the audacity to mention about 500 Chinese soldiers would be coming with him. I don't remember and I didn't see it in the letter, but [Lukhangwa](#) said that in the letter it was written, "In order to make sure to be able to suppress the Tibetan demons [tib. bod kyi 'byung po mgo gnon thub thabs], we have sent 20 officers and some 500 Chinese soldiers so you have to make all the arrangements for their stay to be comfortable. This, as already mentioned, sent the Tsondu into a furor. No further discussion was possible in the Tsondu. Even the representatives of Sera and Drepung were having a heated debate among themselves.

Q

How was it? What did they say?

A

I think it was one of the Drepung representatives who said that we must do something because the Panchen Lama must be invited back and unless some consideration is shown, he will not be able to return. Another faction opposed this idea. There were a lot of arguments amongst the abbots.

Lukhangwa was also very aggressive and he was the most forceful protestor, shouting loudly at the meeting and stretching out his neck. He said, "Our beloved Dalai Lama is yet to be and we, his followers and subjects, cannot make decisions, just as a servant cannot change any decision already made by the master [tib. dpon thag g.yog gcod].

Initially, they had the plan to take over Shigatse Dzong and the various offices opened by the government at [Tashilhunpo](#) would be closed. All these decisions had been made by the 13th Dalai Lama and we the subjects cannot change them. His reincarnation is yet to be recognized and he has not appointed anyone to function as the religious and temporal ruler. Under such circumstances, we cannot change the standing orders. [Lukhangwa](#) gave a highly emotional and fiery speech.

Everyone, from the top official to the minor ordinary lay officials and the [tsidrung](#) also stood up and expressed their unanimous decision to deny entry to the Panchen Lama if even a single Chinese was to accompany him. They said that they were willing to take an oath which says that the Tibetan people unanimously agree and make an oath [tib. mna' gan mthu mo che] to deny entry to the Panchen Lama if even a single Chinese accompanies him. The session lasted till noon. They left to report their decision to the Kashag. However, after a while everyone cooled down, after much discussion they said it is not proper to bar the Panchen Lama from entering Tibet and some consideration must be shown. Finally, it was decided that he will be allowed to bring his Chinese escorts up to [Tashilhunpo](#) and they can stay there for a month. But there should be a foreign country who will vouch [tib. bar zhugs] that the Panchen Lama's Chinese escorts would leave after a month's stay.

Q

Where would they find a foreign country?

A

If no neutral foreign country vouches then they will not allow even a single Chinese to enter the country. If the Panchen Lama wishes to come to Tibet along with his attendants [excluding the Chinese] the Tibetan government will make all the arrangements including for his bodyguards. However, we will not tolerate any Chinese or Mongolians to enter the country since we have already taken an oath not to allow any Chinese or Mongolians. The decision was formally put under seal [signed] the next day. The [Trunyichemmo](#) Dombo was there. His handwriting was very good and Tsipön Shelkar Lingpa and [Trogawa](#) [tib. khro dga' bo] were there. It took the whole day to put seals on the oath.

Q

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Was it like they couldn't control the people and they made the oath or was there a plan for doing that from the beginning?

A

I don't have any idea about that.

Q

According to the contents of the letter written by the Regent to Phabongka, he mentioned that the Tsondu had already passed the above decision and there was nothing he could do about it.

A

He had written something like that.

Q

Actually, 500 Chinese soldiers was not a large amount, right?

A

Yes, but even though it was a small number of people, it would defile the place [tib. sa 'dzad]. In the past, when Huang Musong came, he left some people behind him. So I am not sure whether they were afraid of this.

Q

Is it true that they could not continue this dialogue of compromise for long since the Panchen Lama died shortly after?

A

That is true. The official letter denying entry to the Chinese soldiers was dispatched. When this letter arrived at Jyekundo, the Panchen Lama had already left for a visit to the monastery of Ragshi Lungshug [tib. ?] which probably was quite near to Jagsamkka [tib. lcags zam kha]. However, he heard this news. Before that, he had received a message from Beijing saying that for the time being he should not proceed to Lhasa and he must send back the Chinese soldiers. Then he returned to Jyekundo and died there. Some people said that he died in Ragshi Lungshug Monastery.

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Much later, I made inquiries from the monastic official of Döndupling [tib. don grub gling] Monastery in Jyekundo. They told me that the Panchen Lama died at a place called Gyanak Labrang [tib. rgya nag bla brang], which was an estate that belonged to the same monastery in Jyekundo. I think they had some problems concerning the remains of the late Panchen Lama. Some said that the remains should be taken up to the [Tsang](#) area [where his monastery was] and the other said, it should be taken down to Xining. A third faction wanted to take them to somewhere in [Dartsedo](#). Finally, it was taken down to Triu Khangsar [tib. [tre](#) hor khang gsar] by the Wang something Lama.

Some say this came about because one of the attendants of the late Panchen Lama got together with the Khangsar Lady Chieftain, Khangsar Pönmo [tib. khang gsar dpon mo] and they got married. I think Trenthong [tib. bkra s mthong] was the Doji and he wrote to the government saying that there is disagreement among the followers concerning the remains of the late Panchen Lama and it is a good opportunity if the government sent the Acting Depön Chokpe [tib. lcog spe] to bring back the remains. He was a bearded boy. Meanwhile, down there, Khangsar Pönmo and the Chinese Liu Zijian didn't get along well about the bridegroom and they sent some Chinese soldiers. After that, the remains of the Panchen Lama was taken up via Jyekundo and then to [Tashilhunpo](#). The government offered 500 butter lamps and other necessary religious rites everyday wherever they stayed overnight till the remains were taken to [Tashilhunpo](#), the root monastery. This was supplied by the office in charge of performing rituals [tib. zhabs brtan khang]. A kalön accompanied the remains up to [Tashilhunpo](#).

Q

Did the remains go through Lhasa?

A

No. Not through Lhasa, but it was taken through the Northern route.

Q

They took the remains up and down so many times, right?

A

Yes, they took it down and then they loaded the remains on horseback and brought it up to Jyekundo like running away.

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Q

During that time, they just kept the remains, right?

A

Yes, then the government sent a palanquin and brought it up. When it reached the [Tashilhunpo](#) monastery, an official ceremony was held. At that time, the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama was yet to be recognized.

Q

At that time, was [Trimön](#) discharged from his post?

A

Yes, he had already been discharged, but he didn't die.

Q

This was during 1935-36?

A

Yes. I remember the newly discovered Dalai Lama came up to Lhasa in 1938, right?

Q

No. It was in 1939. After that, did not the so-called Communist Long March [tib. [gung phran rgyang skyod](#)] take place?

A

Yes. The Long March took place around that time, but I don't know much about it. There was not much furor about this in Lhasa.

Q

I heard that Kyabje [tib. skyabs rje] Phabongka performed the fire exorcism rite [tib. sbyin sreg] down there, right?

A



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Most of the action took place in the Chamdo area. A few of the regiments were sent from Lhasa. Most of this 'Long March' took place in Ba, Litang and Geda [tib?].

Q

At that time both the Regent and the Prime Minister were in office, right?

A

I am not certain. Most probably, they would have been in office.

Q

This was when many Kazaks [tib. ha sa kha pa] rushed into Tibet, right?

A

It was long after that that a few Kazaks went from the north to the Afghanistan side. Only a few of them came to Lhasa.

Q

During the Communists Long March they arrived in the Horkhog area. At that time, the Doji were Lobsang Palden [tib. blo bzang dpal ldan] and Surkhang Surpa. The government had sent strong orders to them saying to stop them from crossing over the Tibetan border.

A

Yes. Many orders were sent. That time, [Panda](#) Topgye and the elder brother of Jagö Namgyal Dorje [tib. bya rgod rnam rgyal rdo rje] had gone to talk to the Communist Chinese and ask them not to cross the Tibetan border. However, they were arrested and were thrown into jail by the Communists.

Q

Actually, they [Communists] themselves were running away, right?

A

No. The communists were coming up. So they went to tell them not to come up to the border. To get them [Jagö, etc] released they took a few hundred thousand [khe](#) of grain and thousands of cattle from Derge [tib. sde dge]. The ironic thing is that after they were

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released after paying a fortune in ransom, the Chinese conferred Jagötshang and [Panda Tobgye](#) a rank and promised to grant them a lot of favors when the Communists came into power. After that, the Chinese soldiers went back to Xining where they did not stop for long. I think they stayed there only for a year. I heard that they also made war in Xining and many of them were killed. The Chinese on their Long March were really in pathetic condition.

Q

After running out of food supplies, they had to even boil their shoe soles and eat them, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Where did they make war in Xining?

A

Ma Bufang's brother who was called the Commander Gar was supposed to have massacred thousands of people.

Q

He just killed them, right?

A

Yes. He killed several thousand and also buried them alive. This talk had reached Lhasa. Fortunately these killings did not take place in Tibet. At that time, the government performed rituals, but I didn't know in detail.

Q

At that time, people were afraid of the Communists, right?

A

Yes. And a few rituals were performed.

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Q

According to my notes here, [Trimön](#) resigned from his post in 1937. Is this correct?

A

It must be somewhere around that time. Within 2 years after his trip to Chönkorgyal, he had resigned.

Q

He went to Chönkorgyal in 1935 (Wood-Pig Year) and in 1936 (Fire-Dog Year) the Communists Long March took place.

A

I am definite that within a year or two after his trip, he resigned. However, I don't remember the day and date precisely. Actually, I have a note in which all the dates are written but unfortunately it is not here with me.

Q

Did you write the dates in your book?

A

No, I didn't.

Q

At that time, the German Doctor Schaefer arrived with five people, right?

A

I think it was around that time, they arrived for sure.

Q

Why did they come?

A

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It was during Reting's time. I was also there in the meeting. According to what they said outwardly, they had sent a petition from Gangtok asking to visit Tibet. However, I don't know what their real reasons were. I am not sure what the British reported internally. Richardson was also in Lhasa. Later, the Tsondu granted them permission to enter Tibet. At that time, Hitler was yet to hit the scene. He was yet to become famous or infamous. No one knew who Hitler was. The German doctor and his friends had stated that they only wanted to look at the mountains and the lakes [tourist] so they arrived one fine day and stayed at Trelde Linga [tib. 'phral bde gling ga]. They were all bearded people. I used to think that all the Germans were bearded people. Probably, the foreigners used to keep their beard long to show that they had been on a trip.

They had been warned that they are not allowed to bring in any wireless equipment except cameras. Later, they made a facility to listen to wireless, but I don't know if they were allowed to send messages. They had one person among them who knew how to operate a wireless set. They did not distrust the Tibetans. They seemed to trust us and they were not afraid of the Tibetans. They pitched a tent on the roof of the Trelde Linga's recreation [tib. spro khang] house. There was a bald person with blue eyes who lived in the tent and we were brought there to look after him. They had a Sikkimese interpreter sent by the Indian Government and we told them that you are not allowed to use a wireless. They said, "Since there were no newspapers and they are forbidden to bring a wireless set, they said that they fell completely out of touch with the outside world, so they had improvised a crude radio or wireless receiver. In an empty Vaseline box into which they had put some batteries and then they required a blue substance known as "Nele Thödra [tib. ne le thod khrag?]. By putting the doctor's stethoscope to this contraption you could hear the news. He would ask us to listen to it too. We didn't know if they could send messages through this apparatus. The British had put them under surveillance, constantly looking at which [kudrak](#) they were meeting with and whatever they were doing. They came during a New Year ceremony and later at the Mönlam Festival, he [the bald German] got stoned by the monks.

Q

Why did they stone him?

A

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It is said that he did not pay attention to them [tib. mthong snang la ma 'jug pa]. However, most probably he must have tried to photograph the exorcism rite (tib. [torgya](#) [gtor rgyag]). The Indians had provided them with a Sikkimese interpreter, grooms and cooks. We provided them with a house only.

Q

I heard that the British stoned him and then they took away their cameras.

A

They couldn't do that because there were many people. They had brought from there people who were Sikkimese who spoke Tibetan and they were also serving them and they even brought grooms.

Q

What was the main purpose of their visit to Tibet?

A

After arriving in Tibet, they said that they wanted to visit the Yambu Lagang [tib. yam bu bla sgang]. [the first house built in Tibet].

Q

Who was the liaison officer (tib. Neshen [sne shan])?

A

Möndröl Khyenrab Künsang [tib. smon grol mkhyen rab kun bzang] was the liaison officer. He spoke excellent English and was kind of engrossed in English [language]. Once I remember at the time of the festival where guns and arrows were shot from horseback behind the Potala [tib. rdzong rgyab zhar 'phen], tents were pitched for the Kashag and the tents for the lay officials were pitched in a line. During this festival, Richardson, a Chinese representative left behind by Huang Musong, a Nepalese representative (who spoke good English), and the Germans and some Bhutanese (who did not take active interest) were all invited. Most of them were standing and talking among themselves. We were at the party but we were more like spectators. We wondered what languages they were using among

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themselves. Later we realized that English was the common medium and this language was very good.

Later the Germans visited Sera and Drepung, but I am not sure if they went to Ganden. After that, they sought permission to visit Yambu Lagang. They said they were very curious to know about the swastikas. Their yarn was that the German swastika had originated from the Bön religion. The swastika had been sent from this Yambu Lagang through the river which came to Germany and now the Germans have made it their own. I don't know if the story has any truth to it, but that is what the Germans told us. So they went to Yambu Lagang and it seems they killed some birds at night by shining a kind of light and immediately we received a report saying that the Germans were hunting animals.

At that time, he came to my room. Before that we had no contact whatsoever. I knew the Phala family well and once when his mother was ill with edema, Möndröl brought this German Doctor. I was with them. I photographed them. I had a beautiful camera. They told me that my camera was very good and it was a product of Germany. Later, when they were returning, they had left behind a number of unexposed reels for me with Möndröl and photographic paper and other things used for photography through Möndröl along with a letter. Möndröl died shortly after that. I did not get these gifts. Later, I was told they were displayed in the Wongtö Shinga market [tib. 'ong stod zhing ga] and it was bought by the Nepalese photographer. His family members would not have known what it was nor would they have known that it was a gift for me.

Q

I wonder if they went to Yambu Lagang to investigate about the Swastika and whether this was their only purpose?

A

Probably, they [government] didn't investigate and I didn't know anything about their purpose. Later, we heard from the German side that they were sent by Hitler who thought that in Tibet there was a meditation known as Tumo [tib. gtum mo] which makes the subject invincible against the cold.

Q

I also heard about this.

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A

So he had sent them to investigate and study this. I knew about it much later. Unless Möndröl might have reported to the Kashag about this, in the Tsondu there was no hint about it. I doubt if the Tumo can be taught just like that. You must be in a lot of meditation retreats and must have a good Guru to guide you.

Q

You can learn from a teacher even if you were not in meditation retreat, but they won't teach you Tumo because it would be used in the wrong way.

A

That is one version of this. There is another version we heard from the Chinese side. According to them, the Germans were supposed to be hunters. Previously, they were supposed to have come to the border areas of Xining and Russia in the place called Govidi. Probably, that was in the report sent by the Khendrön Losum after they left. It was said that they came below Jyekundo and had shot bears and brown bears and they were supposed to have photographed yaks and studied about their habits and behavior. In other words, he was supposed to be an animal psychologist. He was supposed to have been sent not by Hitler, but by Himmler. It was written about this in the report from the Tibetan office in Beijing (Khendrön Losum). Their report arrived only after the Germans had departed.

Q

For what reasons were they sent to Tibet?

A

They were sent to study the mountains and lakes of Tibet. There was Dr. Schaefer and there was another doctor. One of them was called Chandzöla and the wireless operator and 2 other people. There were five of them.

Q

If they were not allowed to bring a wireless operator, doesn't it also mean that they couldn't make use of the radio too.

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A

They were instructed not to bring a wireless set but there was no restriction concerning a radio. However, they did not bring a radio. They made one and invited us to listen to it. All their interpreters were Sikkimese.

Q

Was World War II being waged at the time?

A

The Second World War had yet to start. The war started only after they went back.

Q

While they stayed in Lhasa, who was their closest friend?

A

There was no talk about anyone being their closest friend. Now, if a British comes to Lhasa, the first person they would look up was Tsarong.

Q

They were Germans?

A

Yes, they were Germans, but our people would treat any white man as a 'Yinji' [tib. dbyin ji] Englishman. Any Englishman coming to Lhasa will definitely go to Tsarong. After him they would go to Taring. Taring was the [Laja](#). Once Taring was talking with Doctor Schaefer in the [Jokhang](#) and at that time Taring was in charge of the alms. They would go to Phala's house very often. His mom was ill and Möndröl would bring the doctor to examine her. Phala threw a party. I was also invited. At that time, we had never seen a Western dance. Möndröl danced away with his monk's robe on. During Reting's Regency, Phala was the [shöndrön](#). After visiting Sera, Drepung and Yambu Lagang, they visited Samye and crossed the Gepa ferry site and went to Tranduk [tib khra 'brug] too.

Q



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Did they go to Tsari?

A

No, they were not permitted to go there.

Q

Later, our government accepted them as what?

A

I wonder? There was not much talk about them. Not much interest was taken about them.

Q

The government was not that attentive, right?

A

Yes.

Q

When they received the report that the Germans were hunters, what comments did they give?

A

We would not give much attention to such matters. Only if they did something wrong which might affect the government, then we concerned ourselves. When they were stoned by the monks, we were quite concerned about them.

Q

Actually according to belief, we say that if any foreigner comes and visits our temples and monasteries, their mere presence would defile the Sanctity [tib. grib phog] of these holy places, right?

A

Yes, that was a common belief. The Germans visited the [Jokhang](#) and one took photographs, but he could not get a shot of the Buddha's Image [tib. jo [bo](#) rin po che]

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because the iron gate like shutters [tib. lcags dra] were pulled down. This had been ordered by the Kashag. So they took the photo along with the iron shutters.

Q

What was the reason?

A

I don't know. Anyway, the shutters had been pulled down. At that time, since we were at the Tsikhang we went to satisfy our curiosity. We wondered how they could take photos in the dark room and saw that they were using flashes with a sound "tshog"] and a smoke would rise. They did not stay long in Lhasa - only about 2 months.

Q

Do you know anything about Chairman Liu of Xikang [ch. xi khang liu zhu xi]?

A

No, I have no information about him.

Q

It was about Panchen Lama's attendant and so on.

A

Yes it was about a Khangsar Lady Chieftain [tib. khang gsar dpon mo] getting married to one of the attendants and so on. I have not much information about them.

Q

Was Triu Khangsar [tib. [tre](#) hor khang gsar] the name of a place?

A

Yes, it was in the Triu area where there were a few chieftains like Darakhang, [tib. da ra khang], Khangsar, Jakla [tib. lcag la], and so on.

Q

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After that, it was around the time when they were going to select the possible candidates for the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, right? [Langdün](#) had resigned in 1938 (Earth-Tiger Year). We have talked about this.

A

I was in the Tsondu when they went to report to the Regent. When the Chinese were advancing into Chamdo, a meeting was held, but I cannot recollect much about the proceedings. In the Tsondu, they told us that a member of the Jagö [tib. bya rgod] family and another person called [Panda] Abo Topgye were arrested by the Communist Chinese. Since Surkhang Sey [tib. sras] who later became the kalön, had most of the information about this incident, he was invited to the Tsondu. At that time, he was yet to be appointed as shape. The Doji was Dzasa Sursur [tib. zur zur]. I was sent there to meet him. He told us the details about the 2 people arrested by the Communist soldiers. There are certain reasons. I did not think about it then.

We were poorly informed although we were supposed to be very much involved in the political affairs of our country. It shows how little we knew about the political set up of our country. Especially about our Kashag, about the [Trunyichemmo](#) and Tsipön and the various high ranking leaders and other powerful and influential people of our country. So we had to ask Surkhang who Jagö was? He told us that he was one of the ministers (tib. dünkhor [mdun 'khor]) of the Derge King [tib. sde dge rgyal po]. He told us that he belonged to one of the better families of Kham and many other details.

Q

Didn't you know which Jagö he was?

A

We didn't know which member he was.

Q

Isn't that foolish? I mean he was one of our countrymen and not a foreigner?

A

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That is what I have said. Among the government officials, there must have been many who didn't know how many government estates there were, and which area they were located in? They were the [kudrak](#) of the government. These were our shortcomings.

Q

Around that time, were the names of possible candidates like the son of [Mindröling](#) Trichen (tib. smin grol gling gdung sras) collected for the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama?

A

The collection of candidates took place before Ketsang [tib. ke'u tshang] [Rinpoche] returned to Lhasa [from Qinghai]. The Minling Dungsey then, or now the Minling Tricen [tib. khri chen], who is at present residing somewhere in Rajpur, and another person of prominence (I can't recollect his name) were in town. Thönpa [tib. thon pa] and I received orders from above saying that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama has appeared, so the incarnate lamas have to come to the capital to investigate. So you should go to receive one of the candidates, who happens to be the Minling Dungsey. We were told to collect the necessary anticipated expenses and go to receive him. His accommodation was arranged at [Tsecholing](#) [tib. tshe mchog gling]. I think it was just a publicity stunt to draw attention away from the real Dalai Lama who had already been recognized. Thönpa was one of the tsendrön and I was the [tsipa](#) in the Tsikhang. So we inquired about when we should leave. They said they will let us know shortly and we have to prepare the accommodations in Trip [tib. grib] [Tsecholing](#) Monastery. So we thought that the order to proceed would come very soon and got ready to leave since we were going to receive one of the possible candidates for the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. We had to make arrangements quite elaborately. Since Thönpa also belonged to a very high family, we made preparations to go in style. We went to check the accommodations at [Tsecholing](#). The [chandzö](#) of the [Tsecholing](#) told us that he could stay in the Labrang. At that time, the Lama of [Tsecholing](#) was related to the Panchen Lama who was down there.

Q

Where do you mean down there?

A

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Probably he was in Kumbum [tib. sku 'bum]. So they said the Lama is not here, so he can also stay in the summer [tib. spro khang] house in the orchard. Wherever we wished, he was willing to accommodate us. Later, we never had to invite him. It was just publicity to make a smoke screen for the real process of installing the Dalai Lama who had already been found and confirmed.

Q

You didn't need to invite this candidate, right?

A

Yes.

Q

There is some talk about 400,000 [dayan](#)? Did they really give them 400,000 [dayan](#)?

A

It is true. Tsarong had all the details. We are referring to the present Tsarong's father. He was in the [Trapchi](#) office. The money was ordered to be issued from the [Trapchi](#) office. A Chinese man looking like a businessman came to collect the cash for the exchange. The money was given to Chairman Ma and Kumbum. They had been told to collect the money from Lhasa. The person who had come to collect this amount was supposed to be very wealthy and he was like a Xining Muslim. When the government was about to issue the money, he said that he would prefer to have it changed into Indian currency and would collect it in India. Therefore, the money was issued to him in Kalimpong. Later, when Tsarong and we were working in the [Trapchi](#) office, we came across these records and accounts.

Q

How much did it amount to in Indian currency?

A

It should be quite a large sum. During that period, one [dayan](#) was equivalent to about 4 to 5 Indian rupees. Nowadays, it will be much more since one Chinese [dayan](#) fetches about 20 to 30 Indian rupees.

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Q

The proclamation about finding the right reincarnation was issued in 1939?

A

Yes, I think it was somewhere around that time. I have mentioned the exact date and timings in my book. The meeting was held at the hall called Deden Kyil [tib. bde ldan dkyil] and the meeting was known as the Auspicious Meeting (tib. Tashi Tsondu [bkra shis tshogs 'du]). Everyone gathered for the meeting saying that today we will hear some good news.

Q

This meeting known as 'Tashi Tsondu': did it have some unusual procedures?

A

No, it was convened as any other meeting, but in the notice it was labeled with such a name. The name indicated some happy occasion so everyone gathered with expectations and happiness.

Q

During the Tashi Tsondu, would the kalön, attend it too?

A

No. The shape wouldn't attend. It was presided over by the Trungtsi. In the meeting, they presented the various prophesies of [Nechung](#) [tib gnas chung] and Gadong [tib. dga' gdong] They also read out how Phurchok [tib. phur mchog] Rinpoche, Khangsar Rinpoche and Ketsang Rinpoche had gone about searching, selecting and examining for the probable reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and how some of their candidates were rejected by [Nechung](#) and finally Ketsang Lama went and found the place and the boy exactly as prophesied by the vision in the Lhamo lake. All the details were presented in sequence and everything was done very efficiently. It was a very well accomplished job and beautifully presented.

Q

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At that time, you were yet to become a Tshipön?

A

Yes. I was not yet a Tshipön. The first prophecy was indicated (predicted) by the [Nechung](#) oracle Kungö Namgyal la [tib. sku ngo rnam rgyal lags] during the first consecration of the Samye monastery in front of the image of Guru Rinpoche known as "Looks like me." [tib. gu ru nga 'dra ma]. We were there in the back row as a retinue.

Q

Was this was the prophecy saying, "The reincarnation of my great master will be coming from the top of the eastern mountain." [tib. nged kyi sprul sku slob dpon mthong ba don ldan shar phyogs lhun po'i spo nas me gsal lam]?

A

Yes, there was a very good verse which Liushar could recite. The prophecy predicted that the reincarnation would be found in the East. The second part of this prophecy was given in the room called Samgsum [tib. gsang gsum] at the front of the statue of Avaloketisvara. Just as they were going to read out the questions [tib. lung zhu], the oracle seized the letter and without glancing at it rolled it up and put it on his head as a sign of reverence and gave the same prediction. This was the [Nechung](#) Oracle.

The Gadong Oracle took the questions, looked at it and rolled the paper, again looked at it, and then rolled it, and finally asked them to bring in the seal and placed the stamp on the name of the present Dalai Lama, but there wasn't any prophecy given. Later, it was shown to us at the Tsondu and all people were astonished and the seal looked as if it had slipped on the paper. He gave no prediction verbally and the Gadong Oracle suggested a few prayers to be performed. Now everyone was amazed and accepted this present Dalai Lama as the real reincarnation without doubts or hesitation.

Q

Then the Regent also told about what he saw in the lake, right?

A

Yes. And we were told at the meeting that there were problems about the Panchen Lama coming to Tibet, so the Dalai Lama was not officially proclaimed because we

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thought that would be some problems. It was widely publicized that he was one of the possible candidates and publicized as much as possible about [all] the candidates to be invited. In the Tashi Tsondu they explained all the happenings in detail and said now everything planned has been carried out successfully and the Dalai Lama had reached our territory and there is no possible danger and that is why we have convened this meeting. The Tsondu officially proclaimed the Dalai Lama. The Tsondu lauded the Kashag and the Regent for carrying out this mission so successfully and thanked them. They also requested them to continue their good work by carrying out the enthronement ceremony as soon as possible.

Q

At that time, [Bönshö](#) was a kalön, right?

A

Yes.